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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8634
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3371
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9574
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3987
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3850
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0059
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0836
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2081

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001823

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USMISSION VIENNA FOR ELIZABETH KAUFMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OSCE](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: OSCE FORMALLY INVITED TO OBSERVE UZBEK
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) On October 22 OSCE Charge d'Affaires Bernard Rouault paid a courtesy call on Ambassador to introduce himself and elicit advice on OSCE activities during this "delicate" pre-election phase. Rouault noted that OSCE expects a renewed mandate from the GOU by December 20, and at a meeting last week MFA International Organizations Chief Ilkhom Zakirov told him "not to worry about it, everything should be fine." Rouault suggested the GOU may have been waiting for the EU's decision on lifting sanctions before considering the renewal of OSCE's mandate.

12. (C) Rouault confirmed that on October 19 OSCE received a formal invitation from the GOU to observe the upcoming elections (copy of Uzbek formal request e-mailed to desk and U.S. Mission Vienna). OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) will now organize a needs assessment visit to Uzbekistan to decide on the format and scope of its election observation activities. The OSCE Project Coordination Office (PCO) in Tashkent is coordinating technical aspects of the visit, including visas, and expects the assessment team in the first week of November. Rouault noted that the GOU refused to invite ODIHR for the past six years, so this is "a small but positive step." Nonetheless, he added that "we need to think about the last two years," during which the OSCE mission was downgraded to a PCO and numerous project proposals were ignored and some projects were cancelled (especially in the human dimension). Rouault suggested that the confrontational approach adopted by some OSCE members needed to be re-thought if OSCE was to contribute effectively to long-term reform in Uzbekistan.

13. (C) The Ambassador noted it is still uncertain what scope of OSCE election observations the GOU has in mind. He also cited recent access difficulties for U.S. diplomats traveling around Uzbekistan that could foreshadow problems for observers. Rouault agreed with the Ambassador that it is important to rebuild some of the confidence and trust that was lost in the wake of the 2005 Andijon events, when President Karimov interpreted western demands for accountability as calls for regime change.

14. (C) Comment: Although Karimov has not yet formally

accepted his party's nomination for President, the outcome of the election is a foregone conclusion. It would not be surprising if OSCE concludes that the elections were contrived, in which case a large-scale effort merely to confirm this would not be worthwhile. The OSCE observation effort should therefore be modest. A major OSCE observer mission could also lend credence to an election that the international community is not taking seriously. End comment.

NORLAND